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ABSTRACT

In outline form, this monograph presents an analysis of specific cues that can assist those responsible for instruction to develop and analyze classroom environments that maximize opportunities for students to grow. It is divided into the following four areas: (1) evidence of effective organization; (2) evidence of effective resource management; (3) evidence that specific learner needs are met; and (4) evidence that effective group relationships are being developed. It is emphasized that by developing an environment in which multiple student differences can be effectively met, the teacher is able to more nearly meet the individual needs of students. (DS)

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Monograph #5

Individualization of Instruction In the Classroom

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CLUES TO SUCCESSFUL PRACTICE

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INDIVIDUALIZATION OF INSTRUCTION IN THE CLASSROOM

CLUES TO SUCCESSFUL PRACTICE

The Utah System Approach to Individualized Learning Project was funded in July of 1970 through a United States Office of Education Title III grant. It has continued through State and local funding.

The project is a multi-district/state consortium effort. Davis, Granite, Iron, Jordan, Murray, and Tooele districts have been involved since its inception.

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OVERVIEW

The purpose of all teaching effort is to channel student-learning in desired direction. The more accurate the diagnosis of student needs and prescription of tasks to be accomplished, the more effective is the effort made. Goals may have primarily an intellectual, social, emotional or physical focus. Whatever the major objective may be, the total human organism is envolved.

Individualization of instruction is a means to reaching desired goals for students. It is not an end in itself.

By developing an environment in which multiple student differences can be effectively met, the teacher is able to more nearly meet the individual needs of students. This is a complex task. The student cannot be segmented for instructional purposes. The question asked by concerned educators is not "should provision for total personality be considered", but rather the problem of "how can it be done".

This monograph presents, in outline form, an analysis of specific cues which can assist those responsible for instruction to develop and analyze classroom environments which maximize opportunities for students to grow. It is divided into four areas concerning organization, management, meeting specific learner needs and development of effective group relationships.

I. Evidence of Effective Organization

II. Evidence of Effective Resource Management

III. Evidence That Specific Learner Needs Are Met

IV. Evidence That Effective Group Relationships Are Being Developed

The items considered are critical as a preamble to effective teaching. The teaching act itself is alluded to but not described in detail. Effective organization, management, meeting of learner needs and group relationship development provide a necessary foundation for instruction.

In applying the concepts treated, the reader should utilize those items which are congruent with his own situation.

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I. Aids to Effective Organization

A. Flexibility can be provided by some of the following:

1. All spaces (halls, classroom, etc.) have some instructional use. This includes multiple use where possible.

2. Planning of space provides for maximum freedom of movement from place to place.

3. Provision is made for individual, small group and large group interaction. (These spaces are altered as ongoing needs change.)

4. Furniture is moveable.

5. Partial low dividers are emphasized. Furniture has multiple uses, i.e. tables which can be grouped or used singly, carrels (usually portable) and study nooks are utilized. Small slates and materials "carriers" are provided.

6. Portable partitions, portable chalkboards, shelves, etc. are used so that many activities can occur simultaneously.

7. Materials are organized for immediate access to students, teachers, etc.

8. Total group, small group participation and individual activity possible simultaneously.

9. Wall space is utilized for learning purposes.

B. Sensory perceptions should be considered.

1. Auditory

a. Appropriate acoustical materials may be used so that noisy and quiet activities can take place simultaneously. This includes materials utilized in flooring, walls, ceilings, etc.

b. Few bells, PA announcements, etc. may be used.

c. Listening stations may be provided -- i.e. carrels, etc.

2. Visual

a. Visual barriers may be used for visual screening, where and when desirable.

b. Some areas may be darkened for specific purposes.

c. Color may be used to spotlight areas, provide interest, and variety.

d. Individualized learning stations may be provided with viewing equipment.

3. Manipulative

a. Work areas may be designated for "wet" work.

b. Work areas may be made available for large building projects.

c. Stoves, easels, woodworking equipment, etc. may be made accessible for special activities.

d. Storage areas may be designated for use.

e. Individualized learning centers may be designated.

C. Attention is given to Physical Utility for work.

1. Attention is given to adequate heat, light, and ventilation for specific educational purposes. (Heat should vary according to activity.)

2. Color is utilized to maximize pleasant-feeling tones. Wall spaces should be flexible, i.e. panels for multiple use, etc.

3. Adequate maintenance is provided.

a. Students are responsible for classroom neatness.

b. Materials are organized with "a place for everything."

c. Students, where possible, are responsible for management and care of the materials they use in the classroom.

II. Evidence of Effective Resource Management

A. Bulletin boards and counters are used to define areas, to display student work; for teaching/learning purposes.

1. Emphasis is placed on work completed by the learner.

2. Displays of pupil effort are used to reinforce, motivate, and reward learners.

3. Specific spaces are organized for learners to share work completed.

4. Student-made books, charts, models, and other constructed materials are used to give opportunity for pupils to participate widely.

B. Areas or Centers are organized for specific activities.

1. Special areas such as a research area or reading nook are devised by use of furniture, low shelves, etc. for specialized "quiet" study and research.

2. Work or "laboratory" space is organized for construction and experimentation. (This usually includes access to a sink and flooring appropriate for wet work.)

3. A special space for small group discussion is provided for committees, teams, etc.

4. Space for storing ongoing individual projects is provided. These are appropriately marked for ease in checking and retrieval.

5. Artifacts and exhibits are centered to focus interest and to provide alternative discovery learning opportunities.

6. Center activities are organized to enable accurate monitoring and provide clear direction to learners.

C. Materials are organized to facilitate individualization.

1. Retrieval banks are set up where students and teachers may get immediate feedback on work accomplished, or retrieve materials for other purposes. Individual pupil files including file folders, shelf space, etc., are accessible for use.

2. Library or media rooms are open for "researchers."

3. Consumable instructional materials are organized for ease in accessibility to pupils. Devices are used to store materials in a neat, attractive and organized environment, i.e. boxes with dividers, shelves marked, etc.

4. Reference materials i.e. globes, maps, encyclopedias, dictionaries, etc., are organized for ongoing accessibility.

5. Audio-visual equipment is available in specific areas, i.e. room television, phonograph, tape recorder, screens, etc. These are organized for maximum utility.

D. Multiple-use areas are flexibily scheduled.

1. Library or media rooms are always open for "researchers."

2. Adjacent rooms or hall spaces are quickly converted to meet unique needs of learners.

E. Effective retrieval systems are operational.

1. Teacher records kept provide ongoing data on concepts mastered, work completed, where students are, where they have been, next steps to be taken, and affective input on student's attitudes.

2. Student records include ongoing data on specific activities in which the student has been involved. They provide focus for student effort and build responsible, independent learner behaviors.

3. All retrievals provide data for making decisions concerning teaching/learning experiences.

4. Retrievals provide input which are useful when conferencing with learners.

5. Retrievals provide a concrete data base for reporting student progress to parents.

6. Retrievals provide concrete feed-back for both students and teachers.

7. Information can be retrieved for class management purposes stressing daily diagnostic prescriptive and evaluative decision making.

8. Specific content is coded for management purposes. Both letters and numbers may be used. For example, C - 1 beginning consonants.

9. Curriculum and Media Retrieval Banks are designed to organize materials for immediate accessibility. This may be specifically-designated shelving, boxes, vertical files, drawers or other devices. When students' records are stored for ongoing learner use, several sources rather than one single box or file are utilized to insure efficient use of time and materials.

F. Effective interaction patterns between learners and teacher are operational.

1. Regularly scheduled individual conferences are held with each learner.

2. Learners have access to conferences as they feel a need for them.

3. Small group conferences are held.

4. Conferences held provide data for decision making in diagnosing and prescribing program.

5. Ongoing interaction patterns throughout the day provide a continuous flow of data needed to both teacher and learner.

III. Evidence That Specific Learner Needs Are Met

A. Each pupil is accepted and valued. A pupils uniqueness as an individual is recognized and respected.

B. The teacher teaches, providing input from some source, before practice is done.

C. Some of what the student does in school is relevant to his experience outside of school.

D. Though a separate program is not necessarily provided for each student, learning experiences are so designed that each student can participate effectively and make contribution to the study in progress. Independent, small group, large group and tutorial experiences are included.

E. Provision for individual differences is made by insuring success and challenge situations for all students.

1. Reference materials are available at many different levels of reading difficulty.

2. Many learning sources are available, rather than just one textbook.

3. Though group goals are sometimes set, a student can reach these goals set by himself, by some self-selection of activity in which he is engaged.

4. Materials, time, and instruction are provided for individual research in areas of special student interest and talents.

5. Wide use is made of open-ended questions to allow a student to "feed in" that which he is capable of and to encourage critical thinking.

6. Students are encouraged to work with other students if they desire to do so. On the other hand, if a student prefers to work alone, this is accepted.

7. Students are provided with guidelines in the form of self-instructional materials, work sheets, study outlines, and committee work guides.

8. Within clearly defined limits set by the teacher, students are made responsible for the commitment they make to a specific learning situation.

9. Evaluation is an ongoing part of all learning activities. This is based continuously on the effectiveness of diagnosis and prescription made and is tied to an objective or objectives. It is used to provide data for decision making. The growth of each student is measured primarily in terms of his own development rather than strictly in relationship to national or group norms.

a. Oral and written tests may be used to determine how effective specific instruction had been.

b. Student written stories, essays, biographies, and reviews are utilized to reveal understandings of ideas taught.

c. Affective data are collected by the teacher relative to pupil development of effective inter-group relationships and feelings about himself and others.

d. Cumulative records are kept of written work, oral presentations, projects completed, and other data to show each student's progress and reveal needs as observed by the teacher.

e. Student self-evaluation devices are employed including files and self-evaluation sheets to give each student a clear picture of what he is accomplishing. (e.g. retrievals and contracts)

f. Frequent teacher-student conferences are held to evaluate progress, clarify understandings, set goals, make commitments, provide help needed, and give recognition for work done.

   (1) A personal pupil-teacher conference is held as frequently as needed.

   (2) Group conferences are held with committees in the form of progress report sessions. Evaluation, planning, commitment and goal setting are a part of these meetings.

10. Many opportunities are provided for students to accept responsibilities.

    a. Students are personally responsible for their actions in the classroom.

    b. Attention is given to building understanding concerning the rights of others.

    c. Physical movement about the room is limited only by the needs of the activity in progress.

    d. Active participation in room activities is encouraged. Many sources are available for choice of methods or materials used in task performance.

    e. Involvement in the learning setting is encouraged. Teacher help is given as needed. Students are encouraged to take the iniative in solving problems. The teacher then acts as a resource person guiding and supplying what is needed in specific instances.

    f. Cooperation is encouraged among students in the completion of assigned tasks.

IV. Evidence That Effective Group Relationships Are Being Developed

A. There is a clearly defined framework of responsibilities and limitations within which the class operates.

B. Within the limits set, the students have experience in working with democratic processes by active participation in decision making.

1. Student decisions are never elicited except for definite purpose.

2. No decisions are elicited from students unless an actual choice is possible for them to make.

C. Experience in many kinds of group settings are provided by working as a large group, individually, with a partner, or in committees. The size of the working group and length of time the group remains together depends on the purpose for which the group was formed.

D. Responsibilities for student leadership within the group is encouraged.

1. Some elections for special purposes by popular vote are held.

2. Administrative appointments are made by class officers or teachers for special responsibilities. These appointments can include such tasks as a laboratory director, librarian, maintenance director, materials coordinator, orchestra director, reading supervisor, research director, zoo director, etc.

E. The concept of majority rule with minority voice and safeguards is exercised in decisions made.

F. Discussions, conversations, question-answer sessions, and conferences emphasize understanding rather than rote recall.

1. Questions requiring critical-thinking skills responses are used more frequently than those requiring rote recall. Once a knowledge base is achieved, application skills are emphasized.

2. "Reasons" rather than a single "reason" are generally explored in discussions.

G. Rules for group process are held to a minimum but those adopted are enforced.

H. Individual rights and group responsibilities are defined. Students are given freedom of choice as long as their choices do not interfere with the rights of others.

I. Methods of organizing the group for small group activity are varied to give experience in working with different people in different task situations. These methods include grouping by pupil choice, random selection, alphabetical order from class roster, by seating arrangements, by choices made in testing, mutual needs, and student interest.